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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CVIS](#) [ECON](#) [UP](#) [XH](#) [IR](#) [USEU](#) [BRUSSELS](#)

SUBJECT: EU, UKRAINIAN OFFICIALS COMMENT ON ACTION PLAN,
VISA FACILITATION, AND IRAN

Classified By: USEU POLCOUNS LEE LITZENBERGER; REASON 1.4 (B,D)

1. (C) Summary: In separate meetings, Ukrainian and EU officials discussed the status of the EU-Ukraine Action Plan and negotiations on a visa facilitation regime and readmission agreement. Ukrainian embassy officials said their priorities with the EU in 2006 are to: 1) launch consultations on a new EU-Ukraine agreement to replace the current one that expires in 2007; 2) negotiate a Free Trade Agreement with the EU; 3) implement a December 2005 Memorandum of Understanding on energy security with the EU. Ukraine is also seeking visa facilitation steps from the EU much as the EU granted Russia last year. In return, the EU wants Ukraine to negotiate a re-admission agreement with Russia, which Ukraine says it needs EU help to achieve. Kiev is also urging the EU to negotiate strategic airlift contracts directly with Ukrainian firms, and to fund destruction of toxic ammunition/fuel. EU officials said Ukraine has also asked for "more time" to align itself with EU statements on Iran. End Summary.

EU Action Plan; Domestic Politics

2. (C) On February 3, USEU Poloffs met with EU Council official Sofia Moreira de Sousa who reviewed the status of EU-Ukraine relations in advance of the February 6 EU Political Directors' meeting in Kiev. The focus of the discussion would be on domestic political developments in Ukraine in advance of the March elections. The EU message on the domestic front would be to emphasize the importance of free and fair Parliamentary elections. While the outcome of the elections was uncertain, given the split in the reformist camp, the EU expected smooth elections, with both OSCE and European Parliament election monitors on the ground.

3. (C) The meeting will also include a discussion of Ukraine's bilateral Action Plan under the EU's Neighborhood Policy. Progress on the Action Plan in 2005 was "considerable," de Sousa said, warranting the EU decision to grant Market Economy Status to Ukraine. She added, though, that Ukraine had moved ahead on the "easier" components of the Plan and the EU was looking to Kiev to tackle the difficult parts as well. Unfortunately, there has been no progress since December, due to the political crisis in Ukraine. She added that, nonetheless, Ukraine can meet an additional Action Plan benchmark by successfully holding free and fair Parliamentary elections.

4. (C) In a separate meeting, Ukrainian DCM to the EU Kostiantyn Yelisieiev told USEU that Kiev has three main EU goals for 2006: 1) To launch bilateral consultations on a new enhanced agreement to replace the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that will expire in 2007; 2) To launch negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement with the EU (but which requires agreement on WTO accession); and 3) To implement a Memorandum of Understanding on energy security negotiated last December, prior to the gas dispute with Russia.

Visa Facilitation

9. (C) Yelisieiev also raised Ukrainian aspirations for a visa facilitation agreement from the EU, in response to Ukraine's unilateral decision last year to offer visa-free entry to EU citizens. Expressing frustration at a perceived EU double-standard on its visa regime for Russia and Ukraine, the Ukrainian DCM asked USEU for help in convincing the EU to introduce visa facilitation program for Ukraine, as it has for Russia. He emphasized that the EU should offer better visa facilitation terms than were granted to Russia, and ticked off the reasons: "The EU should take Ukraine's unilateral step into account, Ukraine does not require the registration of foreigners, Ukraine has a good record on illegal immigrants, with bilateral readmission agreements with Slovakia, Poland and Hungary, and Ukraine does not have an open border with Russia." The EU wants Ukraine to negotiate a readmission agreement with Russia, he said, and claimed the text was almost completely agreed. The only thing lacking, he added, "is Russian political will. And we need EU help to persuade Moscow to sign." Realizing that Ukraine still has a "long way to go" on this issue, the DCM nevertheless said that his citizens need to see a "light at the end of the tunnel."

110. (C) The EU version was slightly different. Moreira de Sousa said that FM Tarasyuk wanted a visa facilitation agreement in place by the March elections. She said that the Ukrainians have been negotiating this issue in good faith but that Member States are skittish on moving forward absent a Russo-Ukrainian readmission agreement. Furthermore, Kiev is asking for border assistance from the EU on its eastern front with Russia, in addition to its western front with Europe, which the EU is not prepared to do. In addition, EU member states are only prepared to offer the same terms to Ukraine as were offered Russia.

Strategic Airlift; Ammunition Destruction

111. (C) Moreira de Sousa said that Ukraine has been lobbying the EU to negotiate contracts for use of Ukrainian transport aircraft directly with Ukrainian firms. (At present, the EU has access to Ukrainian airlift assets through a NATO-EU contract to provide flying hours at short notice.) Noting that the terms offered are cheaper than the current arrangement, Moreira de Sousa there was no political will at this time among Member States to accept it. EU skeptics on the deal have noted that the Ukrainian Rada has not approved the proposed deal, and that the current arrangement ensures minimum maintenance and safety standards are met.

112. (C) Ukraine has also sought EU assistance to destroy and clean up toxic fuel and ammunition in Ukraine. Citing an OSCE study which said that Ukraine does in fact need assistance in this area, de Sousa said that there was more traction to this proposal among Member States.

Ukraine/Iran

113. (C) Moreira de Sousa said that the Ukrainian Mission in Brussels had asked for more advance notice whenever a forthcoming EU declaration on Iran was to be released so that Kiev could have sufficient time to coordinate its political alignment with the statement. (Ukraine has agreed to align itself with EU foreign policy statements, as part of the Action Plan.) This topic was brought up because de Sousa said Solana was distressed when Ukraine failed to align itself with an EU declaration on Iran last year. Solana raised this issue at the December 1 Summit with Ukraine; he underlined that the international community needs to be aligned on this issue. The Ukrainians responded that they needed additional time to coordinate alignment on Iran, which they said was a "sensitive" issue for Kiev.
McKinley
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